

THE QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER OF THE
URBAN DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

2nd Quarter 2020

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UDD—at Work During COVID-19

Wow, has life gotten complicated! City workers are following the Directed Health Measures. Most Urban Development Department (UDD) employees are working from home, most of the time -- thanks to City Information Services support and assistance. When we are working at the office, our temperatures are being checked, we are wearing face masks, practicing social distancing, using hand sanitizer, disinfecting surfaces, and washing our hands often and thoroughly. And we are getting our work done.

Redevelopment: Redevelopment projects are progressing in all stages. Meetings needed to prepare redevelopment documents are conducted via Zoom or telephone. Construction projects have continued, so site inspections have also continued -- with protective gear and social distancing. Urban Development staff are also part of *Dine Out Lincoln*, a City effort to help dine-in establishments cope with loss of capacity due to COVID-19 (see box, right).

Housing Rehabilitation: Housing Rehab Specialists are continuing to work with homeowners needing Emergency Repair Loans. As much as possible, site reviews are being done via photos. Onsite inspections are limited to building exteriors, and conducted with protective gear and social distancing. Initially, the Direct/Deferred Loan Program was put on hold, but now application paperwork has been resumed on a case-by-case basis. For the time being, the emphasis will be on outdoor improvements.

Administration: HUD applications and reports were already heavily reliant on digital communications, so the Directed Health Measures simply increased that trend. More importantly, the City will be receiving additional federal funding to help address COVID-related issues.

CDBG-CV, a specialized federal program similar to Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), will bring an additional **\$1,145,912** to Lincoln. Like regular CDBG funds, CDBG-CV funds must be used to benefit low- and moderate-income people or neighborhoods — in this case, specifically to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19). After reviewing data and consulting with community partners and public health officials, the City has decided to use the additional funding for:

- ▶ **Food Assistance:** CDBG-CV funds will be given to the Food Bank of Lincoln to buy food for distribution. The Food Bank has seen increased needs and decreasing donations due to COVID-19's economic impact.

Housing Assistance: Using CDBG-CV funds, the City will provide rent/mortgage and utility assistance to people with low- to moderate-incomes who are impacted by COVID-19 through job loss, reduction in hours, inability to work due to illness, caring for ill family members, or loss of child care or closed schools. A designated amount of the Housing Assistance will be



Dine Out Lincoln

The City of Lincoln is launching **Dine Out Lincoln** to help dine-in establishments cope with the loss of capacity related to COVID-19 due to current Directed Health Measures. Restaurants using a **Dine Out Lincoln** permit can temporarily expand their business footprint into private spaces and/or the public rights-of-way. These temporary arrangements will not be required to meet all the City code and permit requirements for permanent outdoor dining areas. More at lincoln.ne.gov, keyword: *dine out*.

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EQUAL
OPPORTUNITY
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set-aside specifically for child care workers. Program details will have been finalized and funds will be available by the week of July 6th. For updates, check the City COVID-19 webpage for more information. Rent/mortgage and utility assistance will be limited to three months. Payments will be made directly to the landlord/mortgage holder and/or utility company.

With expanded unemployment benefits due to end July 31, 2020, UDD expects housing and utility assistance needs to increase in August/September.

ESG-CV is similar to federal Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) which focus on preventing and decreasing homelessness. ESG-CV does this also, but specifically in connection with the effects of the coronavirus.

- ▶ **ESG-CV Round One:** The first round of ESG-CV funding is providing \$360,000 for Rapid Re-Housing through Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach and \$197,024 for Rent & Utility Assistance for households with incomes less than 50% of Lincoln's median income. The additional Rent & Utility Assistance funds will be administered by the "front door" agencies that already have programs to help with that need.
- ▶ **ESG-CV Round Two:** There will be a Round Two of ESG-CV, but the amount of funding isn't yet known. Use of the funding is being discussed by the Lincoln Homeless Coalition. Round Two funds will be available through 2021.

Neighborhoods: The Mayor's Neighborhood Roundtable meetings have continued, but via Zoom. Additional resources have been shared with neighborhood associations concerning health insurance, unemployment and rental housing.

Parking Services: The Parking Services office is open to the public, but they recommend visiting customers wear a mask. Lobby occupancy is restricted to a maximum of four people. One of our two self-service kiosks was removed to allow social distancing and glass was installed at the front desk between staff and customers. Signs reminding about social distancing have also been posted in some parking garage elevator lobbies.

During April and May, when Lincoln residents were told to work from home if possible, they did. The change impacted Parking Services in much the same way it impacted restaurants. The almost empty parking garages forced Parking Services to furlough a number of contracted Republic Parking employees. Now, with easing of the health directives, the demand for parking is increasing and furloughed employees are being brought back. During the slow period, many parking garage maintenance projects were completed -- wash downs, painting, and minor repair work -- which are easier when few are cars in the garages.

Even though normal demand for parking was reduced, construction projects haven't stopped. The Lied Place construction is still in full swing adjacent to the Que Place garage. The Eagle garage renovation is still underway, with completion projected for early 2021. Block 4 garage planning & design is moving forward in Haymarket South and negotiation has begun for the project on Block 65 (see page 5).

Just like you, Urban Development staff have had to be flexible and a bit innovative to get our work done. Sometimes it's challenging, but — like you — we cope, endure, and move forward.



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Redevelopment Projects *How about a quick photo tour?*



Telegraph Flats: At the SE corner of 20th and N, leasing has begun and residents can move in beginning August 1st



Telegraph Lofts East: At the SE corner of 21st and N, construction is on track for completion in late 2020



48th & Leighton: Units are being leased and occupied in Phase 1 (left), construction of Phase 2 is progressing steadily (right)



Skate Zone: Construction of the commercial building at 308 N. 48th is complete and the building is leased. Site preparation for hotel has begun (behind the commercial building)

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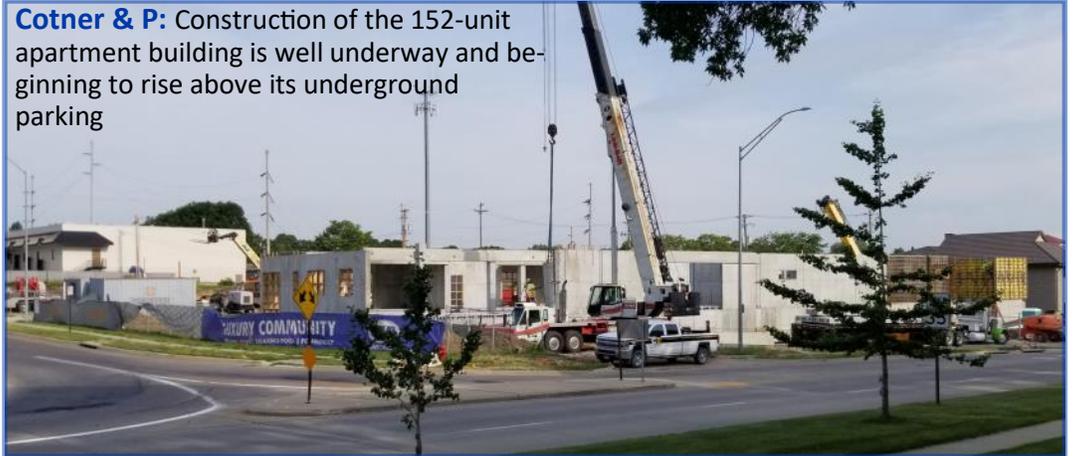
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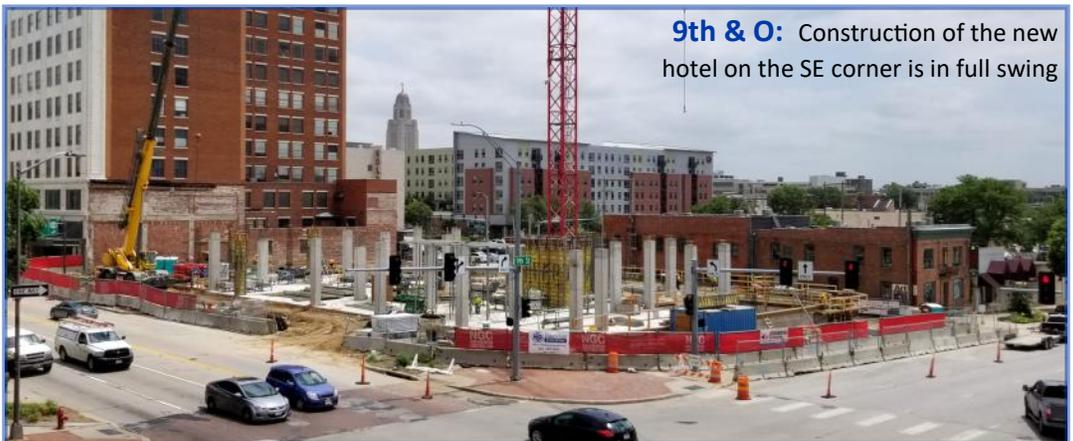
Stone Elephant/Oriental Market: The market (610 N. 27th), open throughout construction, has moved into the new addition and renovation of the “old” building is underway. A grand re-opening is planned in late 2020/early 2021.



Cotner & P: Construction of the 152-unit apartment building is well underway and beginning to rise above its underground parking



9th & O: Construction of the new hotel on the SE corner is in full swing



Canopy Park Residential:

At 660 N Street, in West Haymarket, site prep is well underway (architectural rendering view is toward NW from S. Canopy and N)



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Redevelopment Project Updates

And a few newer projects that aren't photogenic yet...

Block 65 Developer Selected: The City has selected **The Argent Group** of Chicago to redevelop the City-owned property on the northeast corner of Block 65, the downtown block bounded by 13th, 14th, M and N streets. The Argent Group was one of three developers to submit a response for use of City-owned and other property on this block. The selection committee included City staff (from Urban Development, Planning, and the Mayor's Office), Todd Ogden (Downtown Lincoln Association), and Amber Brannigan (an Urban Design Committee member representing the public).

The Argent Group is proposing to build a **15-story, mixed-use building**. The first three floors will be residential parking and amenities. Floors four through fifteen will house approximately 200 residential rental units. Of the building's total 300,000 square feet, over half — 180,000 square feet — will be residential.

The **Sharp Building** is expected to remain on the northwest corner of the block, providing another opportunity for redevelopment and historic rehabilitation. Another portion of the block, owned by the City, will be the site of a **new parking garage** with at least 700 spaces. The City expects additional private redevelopment interest in conjunction with the garage.

An amendment to the *Lincoln Center Redevelopment Plan* has been submitted for Block 65 that includes three phases: the Argent Project, the Sharp Building, and the future parking garage. The amendment is scheduled for public hearing with City Council on July 13. Redevelopment agreements would be negotiated separately for each phase and would each also require a public hearing before Council acts. The three phases, once completed, would not only transform the block, but also encourage further reinvestment.

Pershing Developer Selected: The City has selected **White Lotus Group** of Omaha to redevelop the City-owned property on the Pershing site, the downtown block bounded by Centennial Mall, 16th, M and N streets. White Lotus Group was one of five developer teams to present a proposal for the Pershing site. Four of the five development teams included a Downtown Library as a possible use.

The selection committee included staff from the City Urban Development Department, the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department, and the Mayor's Office as well as Todd Ogden, President of the Downtown Lincoln Association, Carl Eskridge with the State of Nebraska and former Council Member, and Lauren Pugliese with Ameritas.

The developers propose to build a 100-unit, affordable housing apartment complex with a mix of compatible uses, including a wellness center, childcare facility, commons area and green space, retail, and underground parking. The proposal estimates a total investment of approximately \$54 million, including the use of tax increment financing and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. In addition, the proposal designates a location for a public library along Centennial Mall and M Streets, should the City move forward at that location. The project is estimated to be over 300,000 square feet of new improvements to this catalyst site for Downtown Lincoln.

The Urban Development Department expects to work with both the developer and the library over the coming months on a schedule, project amendment to the Lincoln Center Redevelopment Plan, and a redevelopment agreement.

For additional information about the project, contact Urban Development Director Dan Marvin at dmarvin@lincoln.ne.gov.

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Timely Tidbits

2020 US Census: The deadline for completing your census form was April 1, but it has been extended to October 31 because of the coronavirus pandemic. So far, Nebraska's response rate is 67.7%. This is good—we're tied for the third highest response rate with Michigan and Iowa. But we can do even better! If you haven't responded yet, go to <https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond.html>. Here's why it is important to complete your census form:

- Annual distribution of \$4 billion in federal funds back to Nebraska that are used by the state, tribal, and local governments. This distribution is based on Census population, and over a 10 year span every missed household in Nebraska results in a \$51,980 loss in federal funds.
- Redistricting of state legislative districts
- Determining areas eligible for housing assistance and rehabilitation loans
- Assisting federal, tribal, state, and local governments in planning and implementing programs, services, and emergency response
- Assisting private businesses with market-based decisions
- Forecasting future transportation needs for all segments of the population

Wayne Mortensen, New NWL CEO: *NeighborWorks Lincoln* is pleased to announce the hiring of Wayne Mortensen, AIA, as the organization's new CEO. A Nebraska native, Mortensen will relocate to Lincoln from Cleveland, Ohio, where he served as Director of Design & Development at *Cleveland Neighborhood Progress* for the last seven years. Mortensen is expected to start in mid-July.

At *Cleveland Neighborhood Progress*, Wayne served as a design and planning resource to the neighborhoods and helped advance catalytic development projects working with neighborhood leaders, city officials, and the philanthropic community. He has overseen numerous community planning efforts and housing projects, including the adaptive reuse of Saint Luke's hospital into a transit-oriented mixed-use project comprising 139 units of affordable senior housing, office space, a K-8 charter school, and a Boys & Girls Club. The \$63 million project was the linchpin to more than \$130 million in local investment that has helped stabilize Buckeye (a predominantly African American neighborhood on Cleveland's East Side) after years of population loss and economic isolation.

NeighborWorks Lincoln is excited to continue their work of revitalizing neighborhoods and supporting homeownership under Mortensen's leadership, and is proud that he has chosen to call Lincoln home, once again.

Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan: Due to the public health crisis caused by COVID-19, the deadline for public comment on the *Lincoln Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan* was extended to May 15, 2020. You, the public did not disappoint—over 80 comments were received. City staff and *RDG Planning & Design* (consultant) are considering the comments as they prepare the final draft plan. The final draft will be submitted to Planning Commission and City Council for public hearings and, presumably, adoption. Ideally, the public



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hearings will be in-person, but that—along with the hearing dates—is still uncertain due to the coronavirus.

However, uncertain timing hasn't stopped implementation of some of the strategies outlined in the plan. Partnerships are being built with community stakeholders. Ways to increase code enforcement are being studied. City codes — specifically how they may inadvertently affect affordable housing—are being reviewed. Read the Plan at lincoln.ne.gov, keyword: *affordable*.

New Look for UDD Webpages: The Urban Development Department webpages within the City's website now have a slightly different look. Our webpages have been revamped to be more easily read and used on a smart phone. All content can now be accessed by scrolling down rather than moving the view from side to side and enlarging/shrinking the image. On our departmental home page, six large "buttons" take you directly to most UDD functions: Redevelopment, Housing & Homeownership, Parking Services, Neighborhoods, Maps & Publications, and Real Estate & ROW. Below that are links to time sensitive items, like surveys, documents to review, or important announcements.

Opal Doerr Retiring: After more than 43 years working in the City's Urban Development Department, Opal Doerr is retiring. Among her many responsibilities, Opal has been editor of *The Urban Page* for 23 years. She remembers when the most advanced technology in our office was an IBM Selectric Typewriter and maps were produced with T-squares, mechanical pens and Zipatone. She's seen computers and related advancements that have vastly increased the productivity of City staff. Today, among other tasks, Opal manages UDD's webpages within the City's website — a means of communication that didn't exist in 1976! Throughout the years and changes, conveying information clearly, concisely, and in way that is easily understood has been her guiding principle; a principle she has tried to share with the rest of UDD staff.



What will Opal be doing in retirement? Among other things, she will expand her volunteer activities with various organizations, including her church and the Society for Creative Anachronism (a history club). And she'll be temporarily working a few hours per week for Urban Development — until a replacement can be hired or other arrangements are made for her responsibilities.

Opal has kept us well informed about the diverse happenings at Urban Development. We will miss her and wish her the best in her retirement.

2020 Annual Action Plan: The *2020 Annual Action Plan* was approved by City Council on June 8 and submitted to the U.S. Housing & Urban Development Department (HUD) on June 19, 2020. The Urban Development Department is required to submit an *Annual Action Plan* because the City receives funding through HUD's **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**, **HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME)**, and **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)** programs. The CDBG program has three major statutory goals: provide decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities, all primarily for low- and moderate-income persons or neighborhoods. In Lincoln, most CDBG funds are used for housing. HOME funds are exclusively for affordable housing and the ESG program provides grants to service agencies for homeless services and prevention.

For Fiscal Year 2020-21, the funds available include: \$1,947,944 (CDBG), \$1,177,182 (HOME), and \$161,537 (ESG); totaling \$3,291,663. To review the specific projects being funded, see pages 4 – 7 of the *Executive Summary*, online at lincoln.ne.gov, keyword: *urban-doc*.

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Community Land Trust for South of Downtown

A community fundraiser that raised \$15,000 helped the *South of Downtown Community Development Organization (SDCDO)* purchase the long vacant, uninhabitable property at **1105 E Street** in 2018. SDCDO purchased the property because neighbors were concerned about both the building's condition and the shortage of affordable, decent housing options in the Everett neighborhood.

SDCDO is collaborating with the Urban Development Department and *NeighborWorks Lincoln* in response to the neighborhood's housing concerns. The dilapidated house has been demolished and construction of a new single-family home is underway. The new house will be sold to a family or individual who is purchasing a home for the first time. To be eligible to purchase the house, households will need to successfully complete first time homebuyer training through *NeighborWorks Lincoln* and have a household income at or below 80% of the City median income. Construction is expected to be completed this fall (2020).

Interestingly, the property at 1105 E Street is being developed as the first community land trust property in the state of Nebraska. **Community Land Trusts (CLTs)** are a way of ensuring long-term housing affordability by separating the ownership of the house from ownership of the land. Here's how it will work:

- ▶ The CLT maintains the ownership of the land permanently.
- ▶ The homebuyer purchases the house, and enters into a long-term, renewable lease for use of the land from the CLT. The homebuyer owns the house, but not the land.
- ▶ If that homeowner sells, they earn a portion of the increased property value.
- ▶ The remainder of the increased property value is kept by the CLT which preserves the affordability for future low- to moderate-income homebuyers.

Separating land ownership from house ownership prevents market forces from causing prices to rise significantly. In this case, the CLT will provide a low-income family the opportunity to build equity through homeownership and ensure that they are not displaced due to land speculation or gentrification. CLT housing options also protect homeowners from downturns by helping them avoid over-extension. Foreclosure rates for land trusts have been as much as 90 percent less than conventional home mortgages, signaling success for not only the CLT but the household and their housing stability.

Today, there are over 225 community land trusts across the United States. The *South of Downtown CDO*, the City of Lincoln, and *NeighborWorks Lincoln* are excited to bring the first community land trust to Nebraska and continue to creatively address the housing needs of our communities.



The dilapidated house at 1105 E Street before demolition



Elevation rendering of the new 1105 E Street

The new home will be in the Everett Historic District, conveniently near the 11th Street business district, on a major bike route, and on a bus route. The property is only a few blocks away from the F Street Community Center, Everett Elementary School, Park Middle School, and Cooper Park. The new owners will also have easy access to the 13th Street business district and downtown Lincoln.